

APRIL, 1970

No. 247

Guide

A PUBLICATION OF THE PAULIST
INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

G271
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WASHINGTON, D C 20017

Diversity
in The Church

Lord, To Whom
Shall We Go?



Dutch Leadership

Catholics who suffer twinges of apprehension over recent happenings in the Dutch church might profit from a notable statement of Cardinal Alfrink in this issue of *Guide*. It is out of this understanding of its role in the church that the Dutch National Council studied the question of mandatory celibacy for priests. And in what was a unique exercise of dialogue, honesty, Christian liberty and courage it voted overwhelmingly for a change in this law.

Recent reports indicate the solid reasons for this unprecedented decision. 1. The shortage of priests. 2. The widespread belief that while celibacy can be a powerful witness to Christ's Kingdom, it should be completely voluntary, and not a required condition. 3. The spirit of unity between bishops and faithful, which has encouraged frank discussion, resulting in consensus on many sensitive issues. 4. A series of surveys which reveal that most Dutch Catholics—although not all—favor having both celibate and married priests. 5. They disavow any intention of dictating to the universal church on this disciplinary matter, but they do feel an obligation to help solve a problem which is felt keenly throughout the world.

While the centuries-old discipline of mandatory celibacy is certainly not inconsequential, the current debates are gradually bringing to light the much deeper issues that are involved. Some of these questions are: freedom and authority in the church and the legitimate right of the regional churches to study, discuss and come to decisions on their own vital concerns. These are issues that will demand the best light that theologians, historians and other scholars can give us. But they also demand that we act on the best knowledge that we already possess. And they certainly require a sharp decline in what has been aptly called "government by irritation." Hysteria, misinformation, loyalty oaths, secrecy, and antiquated diplomacy can only cloud the real issues and postpone urgently-needed renewal and reform.

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Guide. No. 247, April, 1970

Published 10 times a year (monthly except June-July, August-September when bi-monthly) at Noll Plaza, Huntington, Indiana 46750 by The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025. Second class postage paid Huntington, Indiana 46750. Rates 1 year, \$1.00: 10c a copy: bulk lots of 10 or more copies to seminarians and other groups at 5c a copy. Send change of address to Guide, 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025

Cardinal Alfrink

Diversity in the Church

WHAT STRUCTURES MUST THE CHURCH MODIFY SO SERVE MEN'S NEEDS IN OUR CHANGING SOCIETY

In the strides toward renewal within the Church of today, the calls for change in ecclesiastical structures as well as for the recognition of diversity play a very important role. Both are interrelated in a profound context.

The change of structure is aspired to in the realization that the Church is able to adapt its institutions, in the course of history, to the needs of the pilgrimaging People of God.

The desire for greater recognition of diversity rests on the conviction that the Church, whenever necessary in the course of history, can, and must, deploy its wealth in accordance with the peculiarities of various nations and circumstances in a manifold manner. The Church is, according to the words of the psalmist, the queen "circumdata varietate" (Ps. 44, 10—Vg). A greater degree of diversity is aspired to, not as a threat to, but a deepening and a further development of unity.

The Church is not untouched by the profound upheavals taking place in social relationships and structures in our times. After all, we ourselves are experiencing this phenomenon more and more.

Religious sociologists relate the changes in the Church—in the positions taken with

regard to the content of faith and ecclesiastical authority—to the larger aspect of worldwide social change. They point to the fact that religion and Church institutions are not immutable entities and that their development cannot be explained merely by the evolution of theology as such. There are also sociological factors at play here.

When we speak of the crisis of faith and authority within the Church, that particular fact must be taken into account. This is not because sociology in the Church has the last word, but because, departing from the truisms established by sociology, these truisms must be reappraised critically from a Christian viewpoint, with respect to their possible positive value to the Church.

This point of view, for example, can be

Exciting events in the Dutch church make the theological views of its leader noteworthy. American Catholics should know that he believes that legitimate diversity and decentralization are firm supports of true unity in Christ's church.

This address is typical of his balanced leadership. It was delivered at the Academy of Bavaria in Munich, Germany, March 12, 1969.

validated by the shifts in the concepts of what constitutes authority in the Church.

A purely authoritarian, centralized hierarchy can no longer fulfill its mission properly. It offers too few avenues of communication from the top downward, which is indispensable if the hierarchy does not want to ignore what is occurring and being experienced at the grass-root level of the Church.

Conciliar and post-conciliar ecclesiology offers various possibilities for a positive evaluation of the attempts and aspirations for change and diversity which are becoming more evident in the Church from day to day. This particular ecclesiology lends stimulus to these aspirations, and, where necessary, corrects them in their excesses.

In this connection, we must think first of the newly rediscovered and deepened consciousness of the historicity and authenticity of the Church as expressed by the council when it reserved a central position in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World to the People of God as the essence of the Church.

The Church as the People of God! This means that the "Church really concerns itself with the history of man," that it shares in experiencing its "trials and calamities."

CONTRITE CHURCH

Among these trials are to be counted not only the persecutions emanating from the secular world, but likewise the difficulties within the Church itself; this is because the Church is cloaked in the weakness of the flesh. It is for this reason that the Church is "semper purificanda," (always purifying itself). It is constantly challenged to contrition and the renewal of life.

The consequences of this concept—according to which the Church is not viewed and recognized, in a Monophysitical fashion, as one-sidedly based on its divine origin, but within its historical and human aspects—are developed further by theology.

Then it appears that the centralized exercise of power by the Church, possibly only in part, is largely to be attributed to social factors of bygone eras, and that it can in no way be regarded as the only

possible and legitimate *modus operandi*, viewed in light of the New Testament and the primitive Church. Looking at this phenomenon from this angle, it further appears that the way in which the dogmatic teaching of the Church was determined and functioned was likewise co-determined and influenced by these same factors, and hence, can and must be reviewed in altered social conditions.

The fact that Vatican II did not proclaim in single anathema nor define a single new dogma, stems therefore not only from the pastoral character of this council, but rather points to the fact that the Fathers, following the example of Pope John XXIII recognized that authoritarian leadership in matters of faith and Christian life can no longer properly occur in the form of exclusive and formal definitions. Thus, Christian dogma wants it clearly understood that it must be viewed in its historical context and hence proclaimed in the course of history in manifold ways, without losing its essential meaning.

CHRISTIAN LAITY

A second aspect of this question leads us to the position which the council reserved to the layman. The Constitution on the Church states that the laity shares with the hierarchy in the prophetic mission of Christ. "For that very purpose, therefore, he made the laity His witnesses and gave them understanding of the faith and the grace of speech (cf. Acts 2, 17-18; Apoc. 19, 10), so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life" (Lumen Gentium—Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No. 35).

These last words of the quotation must not be understood in an exclusive and restrictive sense, as if the laity were going to receive from the hierarchy the teaching on salvation, tailored to its size, so that it would remain merely for the laity to apply this teaching in everyday life in the family and in society. In light of the second chapter on the People of God such an interpretation must be rejected.

The same concept must be kept in mind when the constitution says "the laity have the right, as do all Christians, to re-

ceive in abundance from their sacred pastors the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the Word of God and the sacraments. Every layman should openly reveal to them his needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which benefits a son of God and a brother in Christ. An individual layman, by reason of the knowledge, competence and outstanding ability which he may enjoy, is permitted and sometimes even obliged to express his opinions on things which concern the good of the Church" (Ibid., No. 37).

Here, too, the interpretation of the magisterium of the Church must not be excluded from the area over which the co-responsibility of the laity extends; because this magisterium can then become complete only when its meaning is expressed in accordance with the thinking of the present times. Of course, the specific position of the charisma of the office must naturally be taken into account in this connection.

RICH POTENTIAL

It must not be overlooked that it is a hazardous undertaking to place into the hands of the laity the bread of life, the Word of God. This involves not only risks but also new possibilities. The risk—especially in the beginning—is that the precious heritage would be treated negligently; on the other hand, it involves the possibility of a more personal and more profound commitment on the part of the laity.

The council attempted to bridge the gap between the ecclesia docens (the teaching office of the Church) and the ecclesia discens (the preaching office of the Church); between the office of teaching and the office of preaching to the laity. It expects "much good" to come to the Church from this intimate association between laymen and pastors.

The practical experience of the pastoral council of the Dutch Church province has confirmed this expectation: the spiritual authority of the bishops has gained a greater credibility in this open dialogue, in which teaching and preaching merged into a single Ecclesia (Church as a whole), in order, first and foremost, together to accept the teaching of the Gospel.

A third point which must be examined in connection with our topic is the new consciousness of the catholicity of the Church.

This catholicity is being furthered by the ecumenical movement and by the spiritual pluralism in which contemporary mankind lives. In the decree on Eastern Catholic Churches the council has taken an important step in the right direction. Therein it states:

"History, tradition, and numerous ecclesiastical institutions manifest luminously how much the universal Church is indebted to the Eastern Churches. This sacred synod, therefore, not only honors this ecclesiastical and spiritual heritage with merited esteem and rightful praise, but also unhesitatingly looks upon it as the heritage of Christ's universal Church. For this reason, it solemnly declares that the Churches in the East, as much as those of the West, fully enjoy the right, and are duty bound, to rule themselves. Each should do so according to its proper and individual procedures, inasmuch as practices sanctioned by a noble antiquity harmonize better with the customs of the faithful and are seen as more likely to foster the good of souls" (A. 5).

INHERITANCE OF YOUNG CHURCHES

And in the decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church it states:

"The seed which is the Word of God sprouts from the good ground watered by divine dew. From this ground the seed draws nourishing elements which it transforms and assimilates into itself. Finally it bears much fruit. Thus, in imitation of the Incarnation, the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). From the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these Churches borrow all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Savior's grace, or the proper arrangement of Christian life" (A. 22).

And, finally, in the Dogmatic Constitu-

tion on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) it states:

"In virtue of this catholicity each individual part of the Church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the whole Church. Thus through the common sharing of gifts and through the common effort attain fullness in unity, the whole and each of the parts receive increase.

"Not only, then, is the People of God made up of different peoples but even in its inner structures it is composed of various ranks. This diversity among its members arises either by reason of their duties, as is the case with those who exercise the sacred ministry for the good of their brethren, or by reason of their situation and way of life, as is the case with those many who enter the religious state and, tending toward holiness by a narrower path, stimulate their brethren by their example.

UNITY WITH LEGITIMATE DIFFERENCES

"Moreover, within the Church particular Churches hold a rightful place. These Churches retain their own tradition without in any way lessening the primacy of the Chair of Peter. This Chair presides over the whole assembly of charity and protects legitimate differences, while at the same time it sees that such differences do not hinder unity but rather contribute toward it.

"Finally, between all the parts of the Church there remains a bond of close communion with respect to spiritual riches, apostolic workers, and temporal resources. For the members of the People of God are called to share these goods, and to each of the Churches the words of the Apostle apply: 'According to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God'" (1 Peter 4:10) (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church—Lumen Gentium—No. 13*).

With these texts the council unequivocally supports diversity in the Church. This clear posture in favor of diversity, however, does not help to bridge the gap of difficulties counteracting a free and unfettered deployment of the legitimate differences within the Church. This diversity remains

an awesome task whose realization in the Church is being, or may become, threatened both by centralization and particularizational tendencies. Any attempt to deal with these matters as absolute constitutes inherent dangers in this sphere.

The authority of the Church easily yields to the temptation of equating unity with uniformity. Of course, this temptation also confronts the other members of the Church. How easily one feels threatened in this connection in one's own convictions and conceptions! Especially in times such as ours, when many heritages are in a state of crisis and when ecclesiastical life is seeking to firm itself anew.

To overcome this crisis, it is exceedingly important that relations within the Church are dominated by mutual confidence so that we really allow each other to be mutually taught in our search for new forms and images of ecclesiastical life, rather than be hindered in this search by a stubborn clinging to our own positions. The crisis pervading the Church can be overcome only by great patience and great confidence in each other.

AUTHORITY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

It can be asked whether in the present situation the thrust does not lie in the exercise of authority, more than ever before; that is, the transfer of the exercise of authority from Rome to the local Churches, without thereby relinquishing the exercise of the office of the Chair of Peter, and without thereby undermining the preservation of unity in diversity. It is hardly possible to give a uniform answer in light of the differing needs throughout the various parts of the world. This would mean that the bishops would become more than just regular pastors and thus the actual teachers of their Church—a task which in past centuries has received much less emphasis.

An increasing decentralization and an ecclesiology oriented toward the episcopate were also advocated by Leo Cardinal Suenens of Malines-Brussels, Belgium, when, a few months ago, he delivered a lecture on the coresponsibility of the bishops with the Pope.

"Everything that emphasizes and furthers the dialogue between 'center' and 'periphery,'" he said, "is of the greatest importance. Especially if we make the pluralism of the individual churches a fact, the central unity of the Church as a whole will thus be sifted and deepened. True unity must not be equated with uniformity, because conformity is not real evidence of obedience. We face on the highest level the task of achieving the communion of the local churches within the Catholic Church."

I would like to say a little more about diversity in the understanding of the Faith and in theology.

DIVERSE THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS

The term "understanding of the Faith" must be clearly understood; it means that the unity of the authentic faith of the Church must be assured. "In a homogenous world the mystery of faith disappears," a French writer once said. It was not incongruous that the mysteries of faith represented a variety of theological directions and schools, since the message and the mysteries of Christ have already been revealed to us in fourfold form by the Gospels.

The deepening of the Christian faith leads, by itself, to an intensified conviction that any human formulation of the Faith must remain inadequate and insufficient. Moreover, we find ourselves at present in a historical situation when the circumstances in time and culture of theological pronouncements are being recognized by very many. This does not have to lead to relativism.

On the contrary, it can direct our continuous attention to the inexhaustible pro-

fundity of the mysteries of faith and of the living God Himself.

Such an attitude will not only assist us to evaluate positively the theological pluralism within the Church. It will also exhort us to be modest in our contacts with adherents of other faiths and agnostics. In our present-day pluralistic society this aspect gains special immediacy. Christ dwells constantly with the adherents of other faiths and with atheists. He has encounters with them in all spheres of life. It is not at all automatic to be a believer. The transcendental character of the Faith becomes clearer than ever before in this situation, in which Christ in His Faith must do without the support of a Christian society and a popular Church.

DIVERSITY IN UNITY AN ENRICHMENT

The Faith has become a bold adventure to which I am challenged not once, but over and over again, from which I may be frightened away, and with regard to which I may hesitate. Believing shows itself in our times in the form of searching, groping, and inquiring; Christ is experiencing within Himself that the frontiers between faith and non-belief cannot be drawn clearly.

The members of the Catholic Church, because of a one-sided intellectualized concept of the Faith, and because of the uniformity which characterized the life of the Church in the past, are less prepared generally for life in a pluralistic society and in a diversified Church. It is, therefore, an exceedingly important task for the pastorate to see to it that all the faithful can experience diversity in unity as an enrichment.

Thomas Worden

Lord, To Whom Shall We Go?

GOD CONTINUES TO SAVE US FROM OUR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The story is told by one of the American "death of God" theologians of how his young son returned from school one winter evening with an assignment in astronomy. He was to plot the night sky. Father and son went out together to examine the stars. The father gazed in awe at the sky, filled with wonder, and perhaps, in spite of himself, recalling the familiar words: "I look up at your heavens made by your fingers, and the moon and stars you set in place" (Ps. 8, 3). But his meditation was soon interrupted. "Gee, Dad," shouted his son, "which ones did we put up there?"

For the younger generation the heavens do not so easily declare the glory of God, nor the vault of heaven proclaim his handiwork (cf. Ps. 19, 1). Rather they declare the glory of man and proclaim man's handiwork. They tell of the Apollos and the Sputniks, the orbits around earth and moon, the satellites and man's conquest of space, and they hold promise of still greater achievements already within man's grasp. "Look up at the skies, look at them well; and see how high the clouds are above you" (Jb. 35, 5). But to what end? To realize that God is the "Most High"? Is it not rather to realize that man is no earthbound creature but the lord of the universe? It is no longer so easy to confess that "by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, the whole array by the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33, 6). Surely man is well on the way

to finding a less mysterious explanation of how the universe came to be than "the Lord."

The rapidity of the progress being made in science and technology is fostering the new myth of omnipotent man. It is perfectly true that the vast majority of us have very little understanding of this progress. Relatively few men are scientists; relatively few can understand the complexities of the discoveries and their application but clearly *they* do. I may understand nothing about space travel, but *they* do. I may be open-mouthed in astonishment to watch television pictures of the recovery of Apollo IX, transmitted "live" from the other side of the world, but obviously it is no mystery to *them*. I may read of computers that can do the most fantastic calculations with incredible speed, of nuclear warheads that can destroy vast areas of the earth, of new hearts substituted for old ones and human life in a test tube. The more I hear, the less I understand, except to realize with increasing awe how wonderful *they* are. And *they* are men like myself. Have men become like

Reprinted by special arrangement with Paulist Press. This article originally appeared in Vol. 50 of Concilium (Theology in an Age of Renewal). Father Worden is a distinguished Scripture scholar, residing in Upholland, England.

gods? The myth of omnipotent man exercises a powerful fascination on the minds of our contemporaries, and many are desperately trying to convince themselves that man has now acquired the knowledge of good and evil.

CREATIVITY AND LAW

But the scientists whose achievements provide the stimulus for the myth makers are not as sure about this. Dr. Edmund Leach, for example, has no hesitation in proclaiming that man has taken over the role of God the creator, but that he has not yet assumed the role of God the legislator. "Scientists, like God, have now become mediators between culture and nature. Modern science grew out of medieval alchemy, and the alchemists were quite explicitly men who sought to do what only gods might properly do—to transform one element into another and to discover the elixir of immortal life. They pursued these revolutionary objectives in the atmosphere of a very conservative society. Official doctrine held that the order of nature had been established once and for all in the first six days of the creation, and that the proper station and destiny of every individual had been preordained by God. The alchemists, therefore, were very properly regarded as blasphemous heretics, for they were attempting to tamper with God's handiwork. But at the present time the ordinary everyday achievements of science, which we take quite for granted, are of precisely the kind that our medieval forefathers considered to be supernatural. We can fly through the air; we can look in on events that are taking place on the other side of the earth; we can transplant organs from corpses to living bodies; we can change one element into another; we can even produce a chemical mimicry of living tissue itself."

But Dr. Leach is not so sanguine about the ability or the willingness of the scientist to play the role of God "the lawgiver who establishes the principles of the moral code . . . the judge who punishes sinners even when human law fails to do so." He is concerned because he feels that the scientist is unwilling to undertake this second divine role which he considers, not surprisingly, to

be inseparable from the first. "The scientist can now play God in his role as wonder-worker, but can he—and should he—also play God as moral arbiter? If you put this question to any group of actual scientists, the great majority will answer it with an unhesitating 'No,' for it is one of the most passionately held formal dogmas of modern science that research procedure should be objective and not tendentious. The scientist must seek to establish the truth for truth's sake, and not as an advocate of any particular creed. And on the face of it, this principle is self-evident: If we are to attain scientific objectivity, moral detachment is absolutely essential."

LIMITATIONS OF SCIENCE

But Dr. Leach contests this so-called self-evident principle because he is convinced that it was concocted as a defense against the attacks of religious dogmatism, which throughout history has always placed obstacles in the path of scientific progress. Moreover he suggests that the scientists themselves have never fully adhered to their own principle. "In actual practice all scientists draw the line somewhere, and they usually draw it between culture and nature. Freedom from moral restraint applies only to the study of nature, not to the study of culture. Even the Nazi scientists who experimented with human beings as if they were monkeys, rats or guinea pigs would not have challenged this distinction. They merely drew their line in a different place: from their point of view the Jews were not really human, but just a part of nature." But as Dr. Leach realizes, the question of "where to draw the line" is not to be so facily answered by distinguishing culture from nature. It is obvious that there is no easy or certain way of making any such distinction. "The moral doubts of those who helped to design the first atomic bombs have become notorious, and today there must be thousands of highly qualified scientists engaged on hundreds of different chemical and biological research projects who face similar difficulties."

It is clear to Dr. Leach that we cannot delay any longer in facing up to the final problem that man, the master of the uni-

verse, must himself solve: "In the resulting mechanistic universe all that remains of the divine will is the moral consciousness of man himself. So we must now learn to play God in a moral as well as in a creative or destructive sense. . . . We ourselves have to decide what is sin and what is virtue, and we must do so on the basis of our modern knowledge and not on the basis of traditional categories." He ends on this somber note: "Perhaps this all sounds like a pie-in-the-sky doctrine. But unless we teach those of the next generation that they can afford to be atheists only if they assume the moral responsibilities of God, the prospects for the human race are decidedly bleak."

OUTDATED MYTH?

There is an old myth, to be found on the opening pages of the Bible, which tells how God created the heavens and the earth, and how he created man in the image of himself, with the mandate to fill the earth and conquer it. But man longed to eat the forbidden fruit which was desirable for the knowledge that it could give: the knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge that God jealously reserved for himself. When man defied God and ate of this fruit, he was expelled from Eden, for "he must not be allowed to stretch his hand out next and pick from the tree of life also, and eat some and live forever." An old myth? An outdated myth? No doubt there are many who think so, Christians included. But it will be outdated only when Dr. Leach's dream comes true, and man succeeds in acquiring that knowledge of good and evil which assures him of everlasting life.

In highlighting the dilemma which faces us when man's creativity is separated from his moral responsibility, Dr. Leach has helped to remind us of both the relevance and the challenge of the creation story with which the Bible opens. His error lies in his implying that it is only now, in an age of highly developed scientific knowledge and technological skill, that man has become aware of this dilemma. However naive the story of the creation and the fall may strike the modern reader, however superficial the attitude of our contemporaries might be to mythopoeic thinking, the fact is that man

has always been aware that his knowledge of good and evil depends upon his recognition of a moral arbiter superior to himself.

It is not just now, in the 20th century, that man has tried to escape this conclusion and set himself up as the supreme judge. History is full of examples. But equally history is the record of man's failure in this regard, and of the evils resulting from the attempts. Dr. Leach is not himself overly sanguine about the chances of success in history's latest phase. Many will be in no doubt about the impossibility. In other words they will recognize the truth of the Genesis story the more clearly for having been made newly aware of what it is really about: that the way in which we live, our relationship to one another and to the material world at our disposal, can only be guided and controlled by our awareness that all is the creation of the one living and moral being whom we call God. It is only when we separate, in a way that the biblical story does not, the material creation from the men who inhabit this world that we delude ourselves into thinking that man has become God.

FATAL DELUSION

One may concede that it becomes easier to fall into this delusion the greater the mastery man achieves over material creation. But there is little sign of any greater mastery being achieved over the way in which, for good or evil, man exercises this power. Even the so-called primitive story showed a clear awareness of man's superiority over the rest of creation, and its author did not need the experience of today's astonishing achievements to recognize the human potentialities. But his recognition of this truth was in the context of his realization of another, more fundamental one, as recognizable for him in the experience of actual living as it is for many of us—namely that man's creativity is fatally self-destructive when he refuses to recognize that its source lies not in himself, but in the blessing of God, that it was God who said: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it."

One thing seems clear: the choice that faces us is not between faith in the God

whose transcendence is so firmly maintained through the mythological language of the biblical revelation, and faith in man as he actually exists—in you or me or the rest of us—but between the old myth of God the creator and the legislator, or the new myth of man the creator and arbitrator, whose transcendence must be maintained by way of a new mythology: the myth of man come of age, dwelling in the secular city. Precisely at a time when the mythological, symbolic language of religion is being rejected as unintelligible, we are witnessing the proliferation of new mythologies which indeed have the initial advantage of drawing their symbolic terms from contemporary civilization, and can therefore be easily mistaken for non-mythological and “real” explanations of the mystery of life.

THE NEW MYTHS

As Langdon Gilkey says: “There are modern secular myths as well as archaic and traditional myths. Naturally they take quite different forms than have the archaic cosmogonic myths or the mythical language of the theological tradition.” But we should not be deceived by this latter fact. As the same author explains: “There is a split or a disjunction between modern man’s *intellectual* comprehension of himself and his world—which we have called the modern spirit or mind—and his more *existential* self-understanding; that in fact the terms in which he explicitly thinks about himself are different from the terms by which he actually lives. There are many evidences of this split between the secular attitude or viewpoint on the one hand and secular existence on the other, but certainly one of them is the continuation, or better, the re-creation of myths within the modern consciousness itself.”

Gilkey describes myth as “the fundamental self-understanding of man with regard to his origins and to his destiny; thus it conceptualizes his comprehension of the basic enigmas of his life and provides him with some ground for confidence in dealing with these enigmas; in so doing, it also provides him with the models by which to pattern his existence and to judge his behavior and that of his fellows. Myths are,

then, on the most fundamental level, the way man structures his world and his own being within it. Thus they provide the foundations for all of his interactions with that world: that is, his modes of inquiring and knowledge, of art and activity, of communal relations and roles, and of personal life and death. Insofar as modern man asks questions about his origins and his destiny, about the meaning of his life and that of his history, about what it is to be human in all of its facets, and what it is to be mortal and to die, and insofar as he affirms or seeks foundations for all he does in terms of some ultimate horizon of meaning, then *these* issues will be answered in terms of mythical discourse.”

DARWIN AND MYTH

It is interesting to note that the modern mythologies owe much to Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. The word “evolution” has become a potent symbolic term with the multivalent significance characteristic of mythological language. The evolutionary process scientifically observed by Darwin in the sphere of biology has become the framework or chief cornerstone of many modern myths which offer the answer to man’s fundamental questions concerning his origins and destiny, questions no longer asked within the limited sphere of biology, but extended to the total context of man’s experience.

As J. Burrow points out, the mythologizing applications of Darwinism are no longer as convincing as they were: “The concepts of evolution and natural selection no longer seem quite the magic keys to all doors that they once did. . . . Modern philosophical tools have done severe damage to attempts to reinstate evolution as the basis of ethics, while sociologists and social anthropologists have generally repudiated as too sweeping the social evolutionary schemes of their predecessors.” But they remain as testimony to the perennial need for a mythology to express man’s self-understanding, somewhat ironically, seeing that Darwin was considered to have dealt the final blow to the mythology of the Bible. And one hesitates to conclude that the myth of evolutionary progress is quite as played

out as Dr. Burrow implies. It is surely a prominent feature in the current myth-making of the sociologists, who with a Darwin-like claim to scientific method in the observation of social facts, and with too loud a protest about being "value-free", construct their view of human living and prognosticate its future in such a way that deliberately or not, they offer the myth of social man according to which practical decisions are being made which affect the actual lives of millions.

SECULAR CITY

The picture of the secular city as delineated by Harvey Cox is a well-known example. He notes the facts: that in the modern North American city more and more people are virtually unknown to their neighbors; that more and more people choose (or are forced?) to be constantly on the move; that people tend to be concerned more and more not with what a thing is, but with what it *does*, and look for no further explanation than can be given within the limits of human history. But he is not content to note these facts; he must also proclaim that "man" is now anonymous, mobile, pragmatic and profane.

What of the men who cannot find themselves in Harvey Cox's mythological "man"? Of his secular city it might well be said that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard." It is a city without racial violence and murderous hooliganism, without divorce courts and psychiatric consulting rooms, without workers' strikes and student protests. It is a city which contrasts strangely with this description of New York by Philip Hauser, a sociologist at the University of Chicago: "What is going on in New York is simply the logical sequence of what has been building up over some time and is likely to afflict any city in the United States any time. It is the product of a chaotic society in which we have so much emphasized individualism that we have forgotten to raise our people with some conception of their obligation to society as a whole. It simply reflects what is current in American life—the attitude of how do I get mine and the hell with everyone else and the willingness to use force for the achievement of these objectives with

utter disregard for what the impact may be—the right to revert to the laws of the jungle. . . . New York just happens to be first."

It is perhaps unfair to use Harvey Cox as an example of the sociological myth-maker, for it does less than justice to his intention. He is not seeking to create a new myth, but to make the old one—the Christian myth—intelligible to 20th-century man. By marrying an arbitrary selection of elements from the biblical revelation, he purports to offer his contemporaries an understanding of the secular city which shows both its Christian origin and its Christian destiny, without the obscurity and unacceptability of the mythico-symbolic choice of sociological facts with an equally arbitrary language of traditional Christian revelation. It is a fascinating picture in many ways, with many salutary reminders of the difficulties which face the preacher of the Gospel in this secular age, and with many an attractive example of the secular reinterpretation of the Gospel message. But it is in the end a completely unconvincing myth of man's self-understanding. It is unconvincing to the secular man because it is too one-sided a portrayal of the secular city; it is unconvincing to the Christian because it is too one-sided a portrayal of the Christian revelation.

GOD TRANSCENDENT

Cox's claim is to demonstrate that the secular city emerges from the working out of the Christian revelation, but instead of interpreting the secular world in the light of Scripture, he understands Scripture in the light of his convictions regarding the secular world. Only in the last chapter of his book, and far too belatedly, does he seem to realize that his overly simple equation of "what is happening" with "what God is doing" ignores the transcendence of God with which the biblical revelation is permeated: "This biblical God's hiddenness stands at the very center of the doctrine of God. It is so commanding that Pascal was echoing its intention when he said: 'Every religion which does not affirm that God is hidden is not true.'"

Cox realizes, along with so many other

rious thinkers on the subject of the contemporary world—and Dr. Leach to whom I referred earlier is a good example—that the outstanding problem, the crucial problem, concerns human responsibility, and he asks the simple but vital question: “Is this responsibility something which man himself has conjured or is it *given* to him?” His answer is equally simple and straightforward, but in such strange contrast to the impression created by his book: “The biblical answer, of course, is that it is given to him. In the Bible, after mythological and metaphysical overlay has been scraped away, God is not simply a different way of talking about man. God is not man, and man can only be really ‘response-able’ when he *responds*. One must be responsible *for* something *before* someone. Man, in order to be free and responsible, which means to be *man*, must answer to that which is not *man*.”

FREE AND RESPONSIBLE

The freedom of man is one of the greatest preoccupations of contemporary thinkers—and not surprisingly, when one considers the appalling extent to which men are robbed of their freedom and exploited by their more powerful fellow men. The cry for freedom is the rallying call for all kinds of causes, for all kinds of activity. When one reflects upon the political and economic systems of both the capitalist and the communist worlds, and the degrading enslavement of the poverty-stricken so-called “third world,” one is not surprised that the burning question is “How shall man be free?” Even though one is surprised that political and economic slavery is not one of the facets of Cox’s overly optimistic picture of the nuclear city. But in uniting the two words “free” and “responsible,” and claiming that this is what it means to be “man,” he does not put his finger on the vital spot. “No freedom without responsibility” is a well-known slogan, but it is hardly surprising that its record of success is exceedingly poor. Isn’t man’s perennial dilemma that experience offers its contradiction: responsibility destroys freedom? The logic of Cox’s “one must be responsible *for* something *before* someone” seems obvious. Yet *who* is this

“someone” to whom I must respond? And how can I be free in the face of this someone’s demand upon me? Is it not in the setting of this fundamental problem that we are offered the contemporary myth of “society”?

Let us take the example of the law concerning the termination of pregnancy passed by the parliament of Great Britain in April 1968, legalizing this operation on grounds which include both the physical and mental health of the mother, and the physical, mental and social welfare of the family—grounds said to be, by a questionable use of words, the most liberal in the world. This was a so-called progressive measure, said to be demanded by “society.” But many members of the medical profession do not share the opinion of “society” and are reluctant to carry out the provisions of this law. They must therefore be issued this ominous warning: “The time has come in this area when the consultants in the medical profession will have to come down from their dictatorial heights and accept an advisory and technical role. An abortion should not be conditional on moral approval from a man who professes to be a servant of society. The new generation of doctors will probably agree; it is up to society to persuade the older ones.” Is the message that, in order to be free, one must be responsible to “society,” the good news of salvation? Is it any more intelligible? Is it any less “mythological”? Who or what is “society”? What is freedom? To be the “servant of society”? Who then is free?

PAUL VAN BUREN

Jesus, in the opinion of Paul van Buren, comes to our rescue in this dilemma, because Jesus is the very epitome of freedom: “The New Testament points to Jesus as a man singularly free for other men, and as a man whose freedom became contagious.” What an extraordinary reading of the gospels van Buren gives us in attempting to substantiate this statement: “Jesus of Nazareth was a singular individual. His characteristics seem to have impressed his followers so that he stands out as a remarkably free man in the records of remembered parable, saying and incident.” I

wonder whether it is the notion of freedom which immediately leaps to the mind of readers of parable, saying and incident in the gospels? To me at least, it is nothing less than extraordinary, if not perverse, that it should be "freedom" which is chosen as the hallmark of Jesus. Certainly Jesus speaks with authority when he says: "But I say to you. . . ." But does the Sermon on the Mount immediately and principally convey Jesus' freedom?

FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

Take another example: "Perhaps the most radical expression of this freedom is found in an incident in which Jesus forgave a sick man his sins, and then demonstrated his right to do this by healing him. One New Testament scholar has commented on this report, that Jesus even dared to act in place of God! He did not leave it to God to forgive men their sins; he did it himself." Presumably van Buren implies that when Jesus says: "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." (Mk. 2, 10), he means: "That you may know that I am free," and that the crowd who, imprisoned in their mythological world view, "glorified God" should really have glorified the freedom of Jesus. What freedom? What is this freedom van Buren is talking about? Again we read: "In miracle stories he is even presented mythologically as being free from the limitation of natural forces." The one example van Buren gives for this is the stilling of the storm. According to the text, Jesus says to the disciples: "'Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?' And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?'" (Mk. 4, 41). How can any reader suppose for a moment that the answer to their question is meant to be "the man who is free"? It is not Jesus' freedom from the limitation of natural forces which astonishes his disciples, but his authority over natural forces. But judging from the previous examples, authority and freedom are synonymous.

Perhaps it is this that explains why van Buren's emphasis on freedom seems so strange. If authority and freedom are synonymous, then they spell irresponsibil-

ity. What light does the myth of man possessing full authority in complete freedom throw on the mystery of self-understanding? What pattern does it offer for our guidance? What hope does it hold out to us in our struggle toward fulfillment? It is not the myth which unfolds the truth of our predicament, but by turns the megalomania of the master and the nightmare of the slave—unless, of course, the man possessing full authority in complete freedom is God. But van Buren cannot mean this because for him it makes no sense: the very word "God" can no longer be used in this age. But if this is granted, then van Buren's well-meaning effort to "sell" Jesus under the eye-catching label of "freedom" is a case of false pretenses which hardly calls for investigation, since it will take in very few. He is laudably aware of the present preoccupation: the search for freedom: "We would emphasize, along with many modern contemporary interpretations of christology, that the Christian perspective sees the 'true nature' of man in precisely the freedom for the others which was Jesus' own. *Human* being is being free for one's neighbor."

HIS FATHER'S WILL

But the whole reality of Jesus' authoritative freedom stems from his relationship with God, as the gospels make abundantly clear, though one would not understand this from van Buren's selective treatment. It is hardly surprising that he ignores St. John's gospel altogether, for here Jesus Christ is supremely "unfree" of his Father: not one word, not one work, not one deed is his own, for he has come not to do his own will but the will of the one who sent him. If Jesus is not the Son of God, always doing the things that please him, then his freedom is that of the arrogant egotist, making insupportable demands upon the freedom of others. If Jesus is not the Son of God, then it is hard to accept that history can provide us with no better example of the freedom-fighter for whom so many are searching at the present time. It is the Christ of the gospels whom St. Paul proclaims has set us free.

The alternatives before us are to believe in this proclamation or to reject it; to

a strange and futile exercise to rewrite the gospels in order to give us a more intelligible Jesus—intelligible, that is, in terms of current preoccupations and current archings. It would be so much more simple and straightforward to set out our wish-thinking with none of the outdated trappings attaching to Jesus of Nazareth. But it is precisely these seemingly outdated mappings of history that are essential to the Christian Gospel, for it proclaims that God is *actually, in historical fact*, taken action to save us from the disaster of our own self-sufficiency. Without this involvement in human history, Christianity is nothing more than one of a number of mythological world views which, as we have tried to show, man is constantly constructing in order to find a convincing explanation of himself, and an effective way of establishing order and purpose in his struggle to survive.

ONLY SON

The history of Jesus of Nazareth is essential to Christianity, because it is the *story* of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the historical revelation of God in action. If it is nothing more than the history of a man, singularly free or singularly wise or kind or whatever, it must simply take its place alongside many other encouraging examples of human achievement provided by the history of the human race. If it is merely an historicization of how some people see the meaning and purpose of their human life, then it must take its place alongside the great myths which the human spirit has created. And man must continue, stoically, to try and save himself. But this is not good news; this is not the Christian Gospel, and the Christian Gospel is not made more intelligible and more credible by being destroyed.

The efforts of such writers as van der Laan and the whole "death of God" movement bear awesome testimony to a continuing belief that the Christian Gospel *must be*, somehow, the good news of salvation. It is essentially a movement which stems from those who have been brought up in the traditional Christian faith, and who in some way cling to this faith when overwhelmed by the evidence of its unintelligibility, its

unacceptability in this secular age. But it is bound to be a short-lived movement, for it can make no sense to its own next generation which will not have had its point of departure. For them a demythologized Christianity will simply be an overcumbersome alternative to any of the de-Christianized or simply non-Christian humanisms readily available. It strikes me as a kind of "middle-aged" disenchantment. The reasons for this disenchantment are formidable enough but fundamentally it stems from that weariness and failure in courage which are always so characteristic of the problem of middle age.

ONE ALTERNATIVE

The criticism voiced by Alasdair MacIntyre is accurate. He has made, to my mind, the more honest choice of the only alternative, the straightforward rejection of Christianity: "The formulas of the new theology seem to me to derive both such sense and such emotional power as they have by reason of their derivation from and association with the much more substantial faith of the past. Without that derivation and association, these formulas, far from providing modern man with a faith rewritten in terms that he can understand, would be even more unintelligible than the theology they seek to correct. Thus the new theologians are in a fundamentally false position. They in fact depend upon the traditionalism which they proclaim that they discard."

"This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?" (Jn. 6, 60). This is surely a reasonable retort, not only after listening to Christ's discourse on the bread of life, but after listening to the whole of the Christian Gospel from beginning to end. It is simply not true that this has only become "intolerable" now. It always was intolerable. No one will doubt that modern, scientific and technological man has his own peculiar difficulties. This is obvious and the consequences are all too tangibly with us, but it is arrogantly implied that "pre-secular" man could believe just about anything because he knew no nuclear physics or bio-chemistry. Pre-secular man never existed, and human gullibility is always with

us, however much it may be transformed by its new disguises. Man's search for self-understanding, his propensity to look no further than his own powers and his own selfish interests, his constant oscillation between an unwarranted optimism in his own omnipotence and a despairing pessimism in his failure to achieve the fulfillment for which he craves—all this remains the same, whatever his empirical knowledge of the universe may be. He cannot avoid realizing that there is more to the reality of existence than this, in whatever terms he admits this realization, and even when he explicitly denies it. It is for this reason that it is wrong to accept the untruth, so often foisted upon us, that Christianity is no longer acceptable because of its mythological language. Man does not, and cannot, exist without some form of myth to supply that understanding of himself which goes beyond the rational perception of his intelligence and, by influencing his whole personality, supplies the stimulus and the control without which he cannot continue his day to day living.

SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF MAN

Therefore, the way ahead for the Christian theologian does not lie along the way of a radical demythologization of the Christian revelation, but along the way of a more perceptive appreciation of the human need which dictated the form the Scriptures took and which remains the same even in the secular city. The Scriptures do not reflect a particular "world view," as is so often said, but a view of man, historically realized in the person of Jesus Christ, a view of man based on the realization of the reality and transcendence of God. The Scriptures are unavoidably couched in terms which derive from a particular "world view" precisely because the view of man they present is both real and historically realized. If this view of man is real, then it must be couched in terms which derive from *some* world view, for man is an historical being. If this view of man has been his-

torically realized in the person of Jesus Christ, then it must be couched in terms which derive from one particular world view, including one particular part of history. Those who long for a "demythologized" Christianity must recognize that they can only in exchange learn as much about themselves, and as little, as the history of one fellow man, however distinguished, can tell them. Those who long for a "dehistoricized" Christianity—and there are many Christians who delude themselves with this kind of wishful thinking—must recognize that they can only have in exchange an ideal construct of what life *should* mean, my-thologized history, or a non-historical myth, or they can have the message concerning the transcendent God whose voice we are told was heard at the baptism of Jesus, saying: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Mk. 1, 11).

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO

Neither the Scriptures nor the Christian can determine the choice men make: "No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me" (Jn. 6, 44), but we must continue to offer authentic alternatives. And we shall fail to do this if, on the one hand, we complacently ignore the contemporary search for a non-Christian message of salvation, or, on the other, too readily concede that modern man can no longer understand the authentic Christian Gospel. The narrowness of the prevailing scientific outlook undoubtedly makes the preaching of the Christian Gospel more difficult. But it would be an unwarranted pessimism to resign ourselves to the impossibility of broadening this outlook: a pessimism which novelists and playwrights and painters and musicians of the so-called secular city do not share. Above all it would be a pessimism incompatible with our discipleship of Christ, confessed in the words of Simon Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the holy one of God" (Jn. 6, 68-69).

Books Received

A New Catholic Commentary
on Holy Scripture
Eds. Fuller, Johnston, Kearns
Nelson. 1969

Catholic libraries will require this excellent commentary on their reference shelves. It is 17 years since the first edition appeared, an approach which for all its merit, was excessively concerned with the fears and suspicions of the super-orthodox. The new edition is scholarly, readable and beautifully produced—with an extraordinarily good index. The preface remarks that "not more than one-fifth of the first edition material has been retained in the present volume." And fully three quarters of the contributors are new writers.

Much of the generally prevailing exactness, spirit and clarity is exemplified in lines like the following: "The evangelists wrote for an audience of believers. The meaning and not the historicity of Jesus' words and actions were their primary concern; their historicity might be assumed. Hence penetration to the 'actual events' will assist our understanding of the gospel message only insofar as it enables us to see more clearly the light in which these 'actual events' were viewed. . . . This does not mean that the events described did not occur; it means only that the intention which rules the description of them is not a determination to prove that they occurred, but a desire to show their significance to the Christian."

This work rates high even among the best one-volume commentaries on the Holy Bible.

Council Over Pope?
Francis Oakley
Herder and Herder. \$5.95

The professor of history at Williams College here diagnoses the principal difficulty in the Catholic church today as the

place, nature and exercise of authority. He describes the current papal conception of authority, a kind of "primacy of dominion," which has unduly exalted the decrees of Vatican I and the Code of Canon Law. Following recent studies, the author reviews the conciliar theories which did not deny the divine beginnings of the papacy, but contended that the church could look to a general council if and when papal power is abused.

His argument takes him into the details of the Great Schism and to the Council of Constance, and its main dogmatic decree. A decade of scholarship on the work of the great earlier canonists shows how various theories of ecclesiastical authority enjoyed respect previous to Vatican I. The burning issue has come to the fore once more, largely as a result of the doctrine of collegiality taught by Vatican II. Theologians, historians and canonists have illumined the topic with studies of immense practical consequences.

Some will disagree with the author's conviction that Vatican I and II are in disagreement regarding this issue and some will feel that he minimizes the effect of democratizing forces at work in the church. But all must concede that he has written a good book, an informative book, and one which will stimulate further research and discussion.

Prophets and Guardians
Meriol Travor
Doubleday. \$5.95

The writer is a convert who has given us biographies of Newman, Philip Neri, and John XXIII. She here deals with two persistent strands in Christian history which have both brought their strength and weaknesses to the church in its journeyings. Prophets usually work diligently for reform and renewal and endeavor to meet all men with openness and a readiness to learn.

Guardians usually seek first to preserve the faith (and many secondary, outworn customs and structures), and frequently turn to authority and heavy-handed discipline to achieve their goals.

These two Christian groups have been at sword's point particularly during the stormy years between the French Revolution and Vatican II. And their conflicts today are frequent, loud and far-reaching.

The author sketches the ideals and work of men like Loisy, Tyrrell, von Hugel, Dollinger and Lamennais. Their bouts with conservatives of various types and the curial authorities often make melancholy reading.

Others, however, meeting no less opposition and misunderstanding, persisted patiently with their reforms and eventually won signal victories. Benedict XIV, Philip Neri, Lacordaire, von Hugel and Newman have much to teach us in our contemporary crisis. Newman, especially, seemed to have combined in himself the best in both the prophetic and the guardian traditions, although often a puzzle to friend and foe. This absorbing book is a refreshing reminder, in a period of religious turmoil, that "certain ideas and aims which seem new have a long history *within* the church." And it helps us to discern the human virtues and the defects that can result in either fruitful tension or tragic loss to religion.

Pastoral Treatment of Sin
P. Delhaye, et al.
Desclee. \$7.50

This is a rewarding collection of four papers by experts on a topic of increasing concern. P. Delhaye provides a good bird's-eye view of the problem the book attempts to meet. Bernard Haring addresses himself to the question of conversion. The gist of his long, rich reflection is here: he sees conversion as a definitive "Yes" to God's invitation to love; an affirmation which follows the law of growth, ever reaching to deeper levels and to wider areas over one's lifetime. Cyril Vogel offers an enlightening survey of the varied forms of the practice of the Sacrament of Penance in history. His sketch has the merit of being a concise yet scholarly digest of the evidence. His critical views are especially valuable since he served

as a member of Vatican II's Consilium for revising the rites for the Sacrament of Penance.

C. H. Nodet offers a non-technical discussion of the Freudian view of the mechanisms that produce guilt feelings and the lacerating self-punishment endured in the life history of many individuals. He shows how these feelings are to be distinguished from the healthy and necessary Christian sense of sin. Jacques Leclercq undertakes to treat the subject of temptation. But the reader has the distinct impression that he has not drawn sufficiently on the renewed biblical, theological and psychological insights of the last decade that might have illumined greatly his important topic.

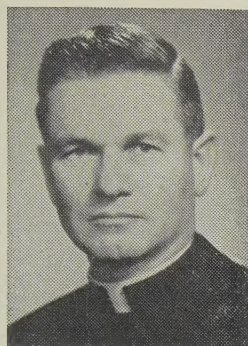
An attentive reading of the other three excellent chapters of this book will give truer perspective to our personal attitudes and improve our pastoral practice. Despite all the fruitful progress of our age, it has neither solved nor diminished the "mystery of iniquity."
J.T.M.

GUIDE

- A Publication of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research.
- Officers: Joseph V. Gallagher, C.S.P., Director. George C. Hagmaier, C.S.P., Associate Director. Editor of *Guide*, John T. McGinn, C.S.P.
- Concerned with ecumenism, Christian witness and adult catechetics.
- Published 10 times a year (monthly except for combined issues of June-July and in August-September).
- Annual subscription \$1.00. Single issue 10¢. Bulk lots of 10 or more copies to seminarians and other groups at 5¢ a copy.

GUIDE

2852 Broadway
New York, New York 10025



Guide Lights

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR THE '70s . . .

Whatever else the Church does in the next decade almost everyone agrees that religious education will be a major task. While this statement seems straight-forward enough it contains booby traps. Not the least of these is what we mean when we say "religious education." It is easy to confuse means and ends here,—to take a particular form of religious education that has gained widespread acceptance and to set this up as itself a goal for pastoral care. The trouble with making this kind of jump is that the assumed model may very well have been constructed on the basis of certain assumptions and conditions that no longer obtain. In fact it may well be that it is the very disappearance of those assumptions and conditions that creates the intensified need for education that is now so widespread. This at any rate seems to be the situation the Church faces right now.

EDUCATION VS. GOING TO SCHOOL . . .

The traditional model of religious education is the school. This is so whether it be the parochial school or an evening school for adults. In either case, the classroom setting has been so closely associated with the education process that the two have become almost synonymous. How did this happen? How is it that means and ends became so closely identified in religious education? This is worth looking at because we are probably going to have to find a new model and we should know something about the assumptions and conditions that will influence our choice.

It happened because all education is a function of society and when particular

forms of education become institutionalized they inevitably reflect the characteristics of the society. For many centuries now in the West the Church has been organically integrated into society and has long performed certain basic social functions. This is true despite the rise of secularism and such conscious political efforts at the separation of church and state as we have had here in the United States. The Church may have no accepted political role in American society but this does not mean that she does not perform very real and accepted social roles. These include acting as at least a co-custodian of the values prized by American society, legitimator of its authority, and guarantor of its ultimate meaning. These roles continue to be performed by the Church despite the prolonged process of secularization that has been taking place over the last couple of hundred years. In such a situation the shape and type of religious education like other educative systems in the society is bound to reflect the style of tradition, *i.e., the way* things are "handed over" in the society and continuity preserved. It is characteristic of Western society since the French Revolution that despite political upheaval, economic advance and scientific discovery, a basic equilibrium has been maintained. There has existed around the wars, revolutions, and social regroupings of American history, an underlying stability that has lasted until the present day. As a result the education processes of American society, including religious education, have emphasized the school because (a) this stability could be assumed, and (b) its presence allowed learning to be transmitted in the form of information. Thus we have had until recently a strong emphasis both in religious and secular education upon the object of knowledge rather than on the cognitive process itself. So much of school-

ing which has been the privileged instrument of education has consisted of the transmission of bodies of accumulated wisdom and masses of less important data. Even education in the very processes of knowledge has treated these as objects of knowledge and communicated them in the same way. In religious education not only did the Church reflect this bias because of her social role but indeed her own self understanding with its heavy emphasis on doctrine and law made religious education a matter of transmitting a body of knowledge. The apt instrument of this is some kind of school. This, roughly, is the background of the particular forms of education that still dominate our thinking.

THE CURRENT PREDICAMENT . . .

Today we are experiencing the upset of an equilibrium that undergirded so much of our social identity. Stability is no longer a characteristic of Western society. Change is occurring at all levels and on many time-tables. In such a situation a style of tradition that assumes the orderly transmission of accumulated wisdom is bound to be out of favor. It is simply not adequate. However, education as the development of a person's cognitive function becomes even more imperative in this kind of situation as he is thrown upon his own resources to an extent never before experienced. The very things once handed over to him in the form of knowledge by society (and also by the Church performing her social role within it) are what are being called in question today. The values and ideals of American society, the scope and limitation of all authority, the meaning of human life lived within that society, — all these are being frontally challenged both in the form of philosophical questioning and conflict over concrete social issues. Yet they are still essential ingredients in the formation of the individual person and his life in society. The style of education, religious and secular, for the '70s will need to broaden the exposure of the individual to all of the sectors of his social environment if he is to have any success in constructing a reality within which he can live and relate to others.

NECESSARY ANSWERS . . .

In the kind of situation in which people live today some answers have to be found

if they are to live at all. Some stability is an essential for human survival and while one can exaggerate the present decline of social stability, nevertheless because people have for so long rested upon all kinds of structures, mechanisms and expectations provided by society, the rapid evaporation of these very definitely conveys a sense of the ground opening up underneath. It is not enough now in education to have people interact and dialogue only with the custodians of tradition. Tradition is being reshaped within the matrix of a pluralistic society and the fundamental challenges being hurled at it insure that its future bent will be considerably different from the past. Education for the '70s will have to include interaction with many facets of society and participation in learning situations that have little to do with stored information. While extensive interaction with the tradition of our society will probably be dismissed as irrelevant, when it comes to religious education certain constants within the Christian tradition may very well be crucial. For in constructing a livable reality today the individual's personal faith is going to have to perform a much larger role of witness to values, legitimator of authority, and guarantor of meaning than heretofore. If anything this will mean an intensified interaction with the Christian tradition together with a new and sometimes frightening interaction with new segments of a divided society. No one school as we now know them can be an adequate keeper of so many flames.

FORMAT . . .

While the familiar model of the school and classroom may fade into the mists the necessity for group support and sharing in the learning process becomes even greater. Hence in searching about for instruments of education for the '70s, heavy reliance will have to be placed upon loosely structured small groups wherein persons struggling with the task of constructing a reality reflective of their society and its emerging traditions, their faith and their human needs will find encouragement and support among their peers. Maybe within such a band of explorers the clergy, too, might find a place to begin the formation of a new vision of their future function and identity. And maybe, too, in such a process of sharing, the tension between hierarchy and community might find a resolution.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.